

**Community Preservation Act Committee (CPAC)  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, February 7, 2013**

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 by Peter Jessop, Chair, in the Community Room at the Amherst Police Station.

**Committee Members in Attendance:** Marilyn Blaustein, Paris Boice, Lynda Faye, Peter Jessop, Ellen Kosmer, Jim Oldham, Mary Streeter, Stan Ziomek

**Committee Members Absent:** Sandra Anderson

**Staff / Others in Attendance:**

Sonia Aldrich, Linda Chalfant, Dave Ziomek, Diana Stein, Paul Bobrowski, Heather Colson, Hope Crolius, Kevin Eddings, Carol Gray, Denise LeDuc, Jeff Lee, Janet McGowan, Aaron Walker, others

**Agenda items to be discussed:**

- Open Space, Recreation and Affordable Housing Presentations:
  - 7:00 Amherst Housing Authority, upgrades to 25 units at the Ann Whalen apartments.
  - 7:20 Pioneer Valley Habitat, Hawthorne Property affordable housing units.
  - 7:40 Town of Amherst LSSE, Community Field Master Plan.
  - 8:00 Town of Amherst LSSE, Mill River Recreation area improvements.
  - 8:20 South Amherst Conservation Association, purchase of Rock Farm on So. East Street.
  - 8:40 Town of Amherst Conservation Commission, Open Space proposals.
- Set agenda for next meeting
- Approve any minutes
- Topics the Chair did not reasonably anticipate 48 hours before the meeting.

**Open Space, Recreation and Affordable Housing Presentations:**

**Amherst Housing Authority, upgrades to 25 units at the Ann Whalen apartments**

Denise LeDuc, Executive Director of the Amherst Housing Authority, and Paul Bobrowski, AHA Commissioner, explained their amended request to upgrade kitchens and electrical outlets in 25 units (instead of all 80 units) for \$110,000 (instead of \$160,625). The Housing Authority has been selected as a CDBG grant recipient for upgrades to the other 55 units. The units were built in 1975 and are 38 years old. The plan is to reface the cabinets, replace countertops and light fixtures, install ground fault interrupter outlets in the bathrooms and kitchens, and install fire access panels. A licensed electrician would do the electrical work. Maintenance staff will do some of the work. The work will begin as soon as funds are available and should be completed within 12 to 18 months. Housing Authorities have not received funding from past state administrations for capital improvements. All units will have an affordable housing deed restriction in perpetuity.

Ms. LeDuc updated the committee on 22 other units being rehabilitated throughout Town. Four units have been completed so far. All should be completed by the end of June 2013. Ms. LeDuc has been successful at securing additional funds from DHCD and free appliances from WMECO.

**Pioneer Valley Habitat, Hawthorne Property affordable housing units**

Aaron Walker, Interim Executive Director, asked that CPAC set aside \$40,000 for the first unit. Since the project has not gone out to bid yet, Habitat has not yet been awarded a bid. Peter disclosed that he is on the Board of Habitat. He explained the timing of the project as it related to Town Meeting schedules. Hope Crolius voiced concern that the trees on the property not be cut down. It was suggested that Ms. Crolius ask that preserving trees be built into the Request for Proposals (RFP). Peter recommended that the Town carefully craft the proposal to meet the needs of the Town.

**Town of Amherst LSSE, Community Field Master Plan**

Linda Chalfant said the Community field is a nine-acre parcel purchased in the 1930's constructed by the WPA. It consists of playing fields, a pool area, picnic area, playground, etc. She showed

photos to illustrate some of the problems and issues related to the field as well as its history. The plan to be done would include sections such as how fields are being used and their condition, how to make the area more accessible, how it would be shared between the schools and community, what should go there, and associated costs. When Jim asked why staff cannot be used to complete the plan and, if awarded, funds used for actual work on the fields, Ms. Chalfant said staff has been cut over the last five years and current staff would not have the time to do the plan. Ellen asked who would do the plan. Dave Ziomek replied that a firm with various staff with needed expertise, such as Cecil Group or Berkshire Design, could be hired. Schools and community would have input. He added specifics of what the plan might include. Stan expressed concerns about drainage and irrigation needs. Hope Crolius suggested that students from the Conway School of Design might be able to complete a holistic plan for a fraction of the \$40,000 and there would be funds left over to be used for some of the work. The Town Manager would make the decision on who would do the work. Peter asked for an estimate of what the ultimate work to be done might cost, but that could not be determined at this time. Linda said the timeline would be about two years with an RFP likely going out at the end of summer.

### **Town of Amherst LSSE, Mill River Recreation Area improvements**

The Mill River Recreation Area was constructed in 1974. Linda showed photos of the fence, pavement with a leak underneath, and the back of a lifeguard chair. She commented on the need for a shade structure. Mary asked about using shade trees instead of a structure. Linda responded that there would be concerns about roots damaging the pool and Stan commented that leaves would constantly need to be cleaned from the pool. Linda said she would do the RFP and the time frame for completion would be a year or less.

### **South Amherst Conservation Association (SACA), purchase of Rock Farm on So. East Street**

Carol Gray began the presentation by showing maps of 650-652 South East Street. Janet McGowan discussed the project as it relates to the Open Space Plan. She distributed copies of the introduction to the Plan. This area has shown up in several areas of the Plan. She showed maps and scenic views of Holyoke Range, Pelham Hills, and the Rail Trail. She gave a brief overview of freshwater mussels. She stressed that this area, which contains seven buildable lots, needs to be protected and is currently under threat of development. The land has been purchased by the Greenfield Bank and there are buyers interested in purchasing it. She summarized that buying this land supports scenic views, watershed, endangered species, the riparian river corridor, critical wetlands, recreation, farmland, and it prevents sprawl. Heather Colson, an abutting farmer, spoke about the importance of protecting this APR farmland zone, which is extremely fertile. Carol showed slides of several animals in the area. She distributed a letter from Mass Bike. Peter asked for a breakdown of the funds to be. Carol discussed where the funding and the bidding process currently underway. She said there is a website at <http://www.filbert.com/saca>. Peter asked that SACA provide documentation of funding sources at our next meeting. Lynda asked why this was not the Conservation Commission's highest priority. The Conservation Commission has not yet heard SACA's presentation. Dave said ConCom has been interested in this parcel at the right price at the right time and this is the best opportunity that has presented itself. He has another project (Brunelle) that is ready to go that is also under threat.

### **Town of Amherst Conservation Commission, Open Space proposals.**

Dave Ziomek said he is reducing his initial request by \$80,000 and his request for Surveys and Appraisals by \$13,000 to \$12,000. He is withdrawing the request for a North Amherst parcel at \$60,000 because it is not ready. The East Amherst parcel is not going forward. He is requesting \$50,000 for the South East Street parcel. For the Brunelle parcel he is now requesting \$156,000 for Phase 1 – 13 acres. He would like to purchase this parcel completely with CPA funds rather than seeking a grant again. He is reluctant to ask the family to wait longer contingent on a grant. There is wetland, farm field, and access to conservation land. Two flag lots could go on this property. Mary

asked Dave to compare the Brunelle and South East Street parcels with respect to their environmental and recreational value. Dave said both properties are similar in natural resources Brunelle also has great views of the Holyoke Range, but has no endangered species that might be impacted. He said aesthetically there would be more of an impact if the South East Street property were developed.

### **Handling the CPA Project Backlog**

Mary reported her conversations with Stuart Saginor and Kathy Roth of the CPA Coalition about what other towns do about backlogs of incomplete projects. They recommended “Grant Agreements” that specify when projects are to begin and when completed and a date when unused funds must be returned to the CPA Fund balance. These agreements are in addition to restrictions and should be completed before funds are awarded. She emailed CPAC her notes and links of sample grant agreements used by other towns. Stuart offered suggestions on how we deal with our backlog of previously funded projects. Completion dates can be included in the warrant article for Town Meeting. Mr. Saginor commented that historic preservation funds are meant to preserve the way a town common was at some point in history, therefore CPA funds could not be used on the common if anything new will go there.

Peter reminded that we don’t have enough money to fund all the projects. Sonia said we have about \$440,000 to spend. He asked Sonia to send out a spreadsheet before the next meeting. He asked everyone to bring his or her calendar, as we will probably need to have another meeting before March 28. The next meeting will be on February 28 when we will hold a public hearing.

A motion was made by Lynda and seconded by Paris to adjourn at 9:33 pm.

### **Documents Distributed**

- Agenda 2/7/2013, 1 page
- Notes from Mary Streeter’s conversations with Kathy Roth and Stuart Saginor of the CPA Coalition, 1 page
- Email from Kathy Roth, 1 page
- Responses to CPAC Questions from Amherst Housing Authority, 2 pages
- Responses to CPAC Questions from Linda Chalfant about Mill River Recreation Area Needs, 2 pages
- Photos of Mill River Recreation Area from Linda Chalfant, 3 pages
- Responses to CPAC Questions from Linda Chalfant about Community Field Master Plan Project, 2 pages
- Timeline and Photos of Community Field from Linda Chalfant, 11 pages
- Letter from Carol Gray and Janet McGowan of South Amherst Conservation Association, Dec. 4, 2012, 3 pages
- Brochure of South Amherst Conservation Association, 2 pages
- Powerpoint Presentation on CPA Proposal to Preserve the old Rock Farm
- Letter from James D. Lowenthal, President of Mass Bike/Pioneer Valley, Dec. 10, 2012, 2 pages
- Section 1 Plan Summary of the 2009 Open Space and Recreation Plan, 3 pages
- FY14 Funding Requests (Open Space – Conservation) from Dave Ziomek, Feb. 7, 2013, 1 page
- Map showing Brunelle Acquisition, 1 page 11”x17”

Respectfully submitted by Mary Streeter  
Approved March 28, 2013